Ladies and gentlemen, the Jetson competition for predictions of the future - Wayne, are you ready? We will go there, even though I'm changing my mind every few seconds. We have more to do but we have had - thank you, this is Peabody coming forward. I will brief the Shadow Minister that we have been having a competition based on looking at about eight of Bill Gates' predictions in 1999 that have all come true, plus we looked at the Jetsons and one of the team intercut footage of actual existing technology that reflected the Jetsons. We've had a competition. Ladies and gentlemen, we had 21 submissions for predictions of what is likely to occur in the future. Time, I'm afraid, doesn't allow me to do true justice to the extraordinary quality of entries to the Jetsons - how do you say it with your hands? You spell it out, thank you very much. I will go to runners up, Peabody, graduate of the London School of Economics by part woman, part dog, with the support of Richard Van Der Male. Our first runner up, Peter Sutton, Australian Communication Media Authority image. The submission was a virtual celebrant. I gather that they tried desperately to be non-discriminatory and I think it's called a heterosexual couple and have other variations. The focus is not on the people being married but who is marrying them. A virtual marriage celebrant powered by 5G Peabody?

All the organising the paper work particularly for same-sex couples.

JULIE McCROSSIN: We are not taking a political stance here today, utterly neutral, do whatever you want. Peter Sutton, are you here? Yes, good on you. Come forward. Peabody will give you your certificate.

(APPLAUSE)

The second runner up is Joanna Gibson, Isolated Children's Parents' Association, who had a vision of the future where you could be on a remote property but teleported anywhere you wanted to go! Joanna is going to get a certificate but, interestingly enough, we have also got a running-up certificate for Wendy Hick from the Isolated Children's Parents' Association. Wendy's vision for the future was you could stay in bed, never leave, but you would travel virtually through virtual technology. Two women each dealing with remoteness in a different way. One through teleporting around the world, the other staying at home but enjoying virtual reality. Round of applause for that mechanism.

(APPLAUSE)

Our final runner-up before we go to the grand winner of the drone was Nigel and it was basically an artificial intelligence method for governing in the public interest. I'm very sorry the Shadow Minister has to hear this! It is a little bit of that sort of convict overhang of cynicism about the overseer but I know you will take it in good sport. What is the vision for the artificial intelligence advanced elected representative?

They get on with the job!

(LAUGHS)

In the public interest. They get on with the job.

JULIE McCROSSIN: She is self-editing because the Shadow Minister is here.

(LAUGHTER)

Essentially, this will be a robot who will go on a certain journey of cynicism and self-interest but will ultimately come to the public interest. We felt this was an imaginative use of artificial intelligence. Nigel, if you could give him his certificate.

(APPLAUSE)

Ladies and gentlemen, of all the 21 submissions, the one we have declared the winner - Peabody if you would get hold of the drone, what we are calling a decent prize. I said to ACCAN, "If we are having a competition, we need a decent prize." From the Centre for Inclusive Design - we remember the new title - Manisha - do you want to explain it, Peabody? Manisha, come forward. We have developed something that tries to capture your idea but, in essence, you are going to have a superhero race but people with disabilities will be incredibly cool people because they will be early adopters.

MANISHA AMIN: People with disability will be the superheroes of the future and the people that we will have to look to to help us learn and navigate the new world that we are going to be in.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Why? What's the link with technology?

MANISHA AMIN: If you looked at the speech with Mark, how amazing in terms of how he has reconfigured his house, how amazing are people who already know how to use eye movements to use their keyboards et cetera. These are things we will have to learn but they already know how to do.

JULIE McCROSSIN: It is an interesting vision!

(APPLAUSE)

We need a photo. Peabody you be in the middle.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you very much. Seriously, guys, I'd very much like to thank Rachel Thomas and Richard who ran with these particular ideas, particularly Rachel who whom I think of as Peabody. I asked her to dress as a dog, she came with a hat. A member of the audience contributed the hat, that's fantastic. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to move - we have essentially two more things. TED Talks with a little add-on and then our debate. I promise we will be finishing on time, even a little early. We are moving to a series of views for a vision of a connected World where nobody where will be left behind. I'm going to make a noise at 4 minutes, then a larger noise at 5. We are asking people to stay to five minutes. Our first contestant, if I could ask Joanna Gibson to come to the front. Joanna manages the communications portfolio for the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and, again, thank you to all of you who came and watched our film. Would you please Joanna welcome?

(APPLAUSE)

JOANNA GIBSON: Thank you. As you know, my name is Joanna Gibson. I'm representing the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia.

This afternoon I will give you a brief overview of ICPA, a little bit of an explanation of what distance education is and assisted educated students in the future. ICPA was established 46 years ago to advocate for equity of access to education for children living in remote regions of Australia. Our members are families living in rural and remote Australia who are passionate about the sustainability and prosperity of the industries in which they work. Research shows that the ability to access an affordable and appropriate education plays a major factor in determining if a family will remain in rural and remote locations.

In our big, beautiful country, where the population is spread over a vast area, traditional educational services are not able to be provided to all students. For many families, the only access to education for their children is to study via distance education. A fascination to some, a chore to others. Distance education schooling has long been the only option for education in rural and remote Australia.

I have lived in the north-west pastoral area of South Australia for the last 20 years with my family. My three children all attended Port Augusta School of the Air for their primary education with either myself or a governess supervising them in the school room. My eldest daughter started school with distance education lessons over the HF radio. We then saw the rollout of internet lessons in South Australia with varying degrees of success.

How does it work? The distance education program is a full and complete course covering all curriculum areas, produced and delivered by State or Territory government education departments. There are more than 16 distance education schools in Australia. They are still often referred to as Schools of the Air. The program is distributed to the family via mail and internet. Most states provide a mix of online class lessons and one-on-one lessons via the telephone.

Improvements in technology and communications have been a huge benefit in allowing these students to have broader educational experiences. There are some very exciting things happening in distance education and communications will play a big part.

The implementation of web conferencing programs has meant real-time interaction between schools and their students. Along with participating in their lessons, students are able to participate along with peers and teachers in whole-school activities such as Anzac Day ceremonies, special guests, school visits, school assemblies despite the vast differences between schools and students.

A large portion of distance education students utilise the Sky Muster satellite for internet and the introduction of an education port by nbn for distance ed students has definitely enhanced the ability of these students to connect with their school.

Families who educate their children via distance education are required to establish and maintain a school room and provide extra learning materials and resources. A distance education supervisor is a mother or a paid employee prepares and plans the day's lessons for their students, sets up the school room, keeps students engaged in the curriculum, deals with discipline issues, ensures students link in for their lessons and more.

If the distance education supervisor is the student's mother, she will also often have workers to cook for, a household to run, younger children to care for and a business to help with.

So, to ICPA's vision for a connected world where our DE students don't get left behind. While we are looking at what we want distance education to look like in the future, I think that we need to strongly reiterate that we don't see technology as a substitute for the face-to-face learning experiences that children need to develop socially and mentally as they grow up. Some may see advancing technology as a way to eliminate the problem of how we get children to schooling by being able to offer them distance education instead. This may suit some families, however, there are a wide range of developmental gains to be made by having face-to-face experiences. We would not want to see improved use of technology limit this for children already living in geographic isolation.

Things such as virtual tours, collaborative problem-solving and project groups will be great advantages that help our DE students learn as they never have before but we have to be mindful that because these children have no other means of socialisation due to where they live, it still couldn't be considered a complete education atmosphere for most of them and replace learning and physical interaction for their social development with peers.

The value of the role of the distance education tutor within a distance education setting also needs to be recognised and acknowledged without distance education tutors who are supported, prepared and readily available to implement the distance education materials on a daily basis, distance education could not succeed.

ICPA is pleased to have been given the opportunity to share our knowledge and ideas and will continue to advocate for our members so that no-one gets left behind. Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

We want to acknowledge you are finishing up as the communications spokesperson for ICPA after four long years of a lot of hard work. We have a certificate acknowledging your outstanding contribution to rural and remote telecommunications consumers. We can't do our job without members like you so thank you very much.

JULIE McCROSSIN: You need to come together and in a totally natural way, shake each other's hands.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: Thank you so much, Joanna, also for that marvellous series of photographs. Our next speaker I'd like to innovate forward is Wayne Hawkins, disability policy adviser with ACCAN. I think Teresa will just assist in that matter. I will just let the others know that the order in which I will be calling people forward after Wayne is Sue McGrath, Kate Obermeyer and Professor Julian Thomas.

TERESA CORBIN: A bit more further, there is a computer already on here. I will get the other mic.

WAYNE HAWKINS: Thank you. Hi everybody. Where are am I speaking to? Can you hear me? Can you hear me now?

>> Yes.

WAYNE HAWKINS: Can you hear me now?

(LAUGHS)

It is a Verizon joke. I am here to talk to you about audio description. Let's start by putting your hands up everybody in the room who knows what audio description is. Mmmm, interesting.

(LAUGHTER)

Keep your hands up if you have experienced a description of Australian television.

TERESA CORBIN: They don't believe you. They haven't put their hand up at all.

WAYNE HAWKINS: Audio description is a verbal narration of the important visual clues that are on a television program, a movie, a performance or, in this case, a presentation. Let's try to that again. This time we'll do it with audio description. Put your hands up if you know what audio description is.

TERESA CORBIN: 75% of the room have put their hand up.

WAYNE HAWKINS: Keep your hands up if you have experienced audio description in Australian television.

TERESA CORBIN: Three people in the room have put their hands up.

WAYNE HAWKINS: Interesting. As you know, I'm blind and that experiment the first time round was kind of pointless!

(LAUGHTER)

But you know I didn't actually need the audio description for the second question because I knew that there would be very few of you who had experienced audio description in Australian television. The reason for that is because there is no audio description on Australian television. Twice we have had audio description trials on the ABC, once was in 2013 and it was - 2012, that was a 13-week trial on the primary channel. The most recent one was on their iView Catch Up. Currently and looking to the future, there is no audio description on Australian television.

That's right. So, actually, you know, what's disturbing about that is Australia is the only English-speaking country in the OECD that doesn't have audio description on television. Even New Zealand, my homeland, has audio description on television. But, in the interests of international diplomacy, I won't mention the other things that New Zealand does better!

(LAUGHTER)

I won't say anything about the All Blacks! I won't say anything about the nbn, like the Shadow Minister did. I will just move on.

One of the other galling things about audio description in Australia is that Australian television programming is audio-described overseas. Neighbours. Friends & Away - Home & Away, sorry. New Zealand, that's why I didn't know! They are audio-described in the UK. They are actually audio-described by an Australian company.

For those of you thinking, "Really? Neighbours?" Blind people and people with disability have the right to watch bad television just like everybody else so we should have that here but we don't. What's the problem? The problem is a lack of willingness. It's not one government's issue. There have been successive governments that have not taken the lead with this. Industry doesn't want to pay for audio description. I guess, at the end of the day, what that speaks to, from a cynical viewpoint, is that accessibility and equality in Australia comes with a price and nobody is willing to foot the bill.

What is ACCAN doing? ACCAN is working with the government, we are sitting on the government's audio description working group, as is the Centre for Inclusive Design, Manisha's team, Blind Citizens Australia, and other blindness sector organisations. We are working closely with those organisations to project audio description. There has been movement recently around the government's broadcast reform bill, getting the crossbench across audio description and, interestingly, very, very good news for us was that the Senate acknowledged that, as part of the broadcast reform bill, industry needs to use some of the licence rebates they've had to provide audio description in Australia.

That's the current situation. What would we like to see as the future of a connected world? We'd like to see all Australians have access to the information that they need, digital information. When you talk of television, television in Australia is digital. So we want it across television. We want it on the internet. We want it in the same ways, the same access, as everybody else. Access to information and communications' right are a fundamental human right. Currently, without that, Australians who have disabilities, particularly in this case people who are blind or vision-impaired - just excuse Katherine Hepburn, I channel her every once in a while when I have to speak in public, but she'll go away - we need to have that and that's - for me, that's what a connected world would look like. I would be able to watch television just like everybody else. I would know what's going on. I would be able to watch it at home on the TV. I would be able to enjoy it on catch-up and online. Currently that's not available. Hopefully the future will change that and Australia, too, will have audio description on television. Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: Thank you very much, Wayne, for that compelling presentation. I've been asked in a number of situations to do audio description and it is another whole area of skill. It is also a fantastic skill to have. There must be lots of people around the world who have that skill.

Ladies and gentlemen, our third speaker is Sue McGrath the national policy manager with COTA, Council on the Ageing, which focuses on the wellbeing of older people. Please welcome Sue McGrath.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE McGRATH: Hello, everybody. Thank you very much for having me here today. COTA is delighted, as always, to participate in an ACCAN event. We have been asked to focus on visions for the future. Nobody left behind in a connected world. My angle, of course, is in regard to older Australians.

I wanted to focus, first of all, on, I guess, the Utopian vision of what a connected world involving older Australians could look like. It has enormous potential benefits. It's the idea of independence and ageing in place in your own home and in the community because services can come to you and you can communicate more easily with the world, you can participate in your community and, for some people, you can even work on into much later life, even if mobility is a bit limited.

It's got an enormous amount of potential benefit associated with it but to achieve that vision, the barriers that create the digital divide have to be overcome for older people in all of the same ways and issues that are there that are creating barriers for others and so income is a barrier to start with. Despite Julie's exciting sort of statements about cashed-up older people, in fact, most older people are in the lowest income levels and that remains a barrier.

Education levels. Most older people have lower education levels and, presumably, as time goes on, will continue. New cohorts of older people will have lower education levels than those that come after them.

People living in the bush. Rural Australia is an older Australia. Disability, people experiencing disability and that becoming a barrier to their connectedness. Older Australians have very high levels of chronic illness and disability.

Migrants and refugees who have arrived in Australia speaking languages other than English. They are overrepresented amongst older Australians as we heard earlier today from Emma.

The group that are not overrepresented in older Australians are Australia's First Peoples. That's to our unending shame that they are not, at this stage, part of that older community because of their life expectancy. But, in general, the kinds of groups that experience barriers to connectedness are very overrepresented amongst older people. So, therefore, until those kinds of barriers are removed, we are not going to be able to experience that great potential that's there for older people in a connected world.

The other part of the vision that I have for that connected world of older people is that women and men land in older age on equal terms in regard to connectedness. The gap is at its greatest on a gender level between women and men over the age of 65. That's got some legacy associated with the way gender relations was undertaken in earlier years. Women's lack of participation in the workforce. Those kinds of reasons help to explain that and there is some change ahead with that. But that's part of my vision - that is not there in that new world.

Despite - that's mean my time is up? No. Despite the idea of a fabulously connected world for older people, part of it for me is also the idea that the primary form of connection in the lives of older people is human-to-human. It's unmediated by technology. There's a huge danger there for older people who are isolated in the home, and it can be replaced - that sense of human connection can be viewed by others as replaceable by a digital connection, and this is something I think that older people don't want. The other vision that I have is that online delivery of services by government and industry to older people are designed for and by older people, and that those services value older people as the end users. And there are the kinds of things in there that older people want to see, such as safety. Without all of these things in place, an increasingly connected world could become a dystopia for older people, and it's something that we've got to guard against and we've got to ensure that the experience of it expands their worlds and doesn't shrink them and exacerbate isolation and illness but, instead, increases wellbeing and good health. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: Thank you so much, Sue. If I could just underline that fear of the dystopian future - whilst as an ageing person is open to new ideas and not making assumptions about how people are going to respond to robots with artificial intelligence who may be able to communicate and respond in a home or residential care setting, I also know that, even though I'm very tired after two days of this conference, I will get up to my 92-year-old mum's house later today to touch her, because I think it's crucial to be touched by some people who aren't paid to touch you, do you know what I'm saying? So that need for that human connection is just so important to keep in the conversation for those of us who are in the higher older bracket. Ladies and gentlemen, we have two more TED speakers. It's my pleasure to welcome Kate Obermeyer, global customer engagement coordinator with Cochlear Limited, a founding member of Hear For You and an ex-board member of ACCAN. I'm not going to ring the bell, but make signals, because that's Kate's request - because she's wearing two Cochlear implants right now. So please make her welcome.

(APPLAUSE)

KATE OBERMEYER: Thank you, everyone. It's a real pleasure to be invited here to talk today. So I've come here to share my vision on what makes a connected world and how not to leave anyone behind. So I thought, first, I should explain who I am. Because I think a lot of you won't know, and I've kind of come out of the blue. My name is Kate Obermeyer, and I'm the global customer engagement coordinator at Cochlear. Cochlear being the company that invented, manufactures and exports the Cochlear implant to the world. I've been there for five years. But I'm also a recipient of two Cochlear implants. So that means that, yes, I am profoundly deaf. So my journey began when I was just 11, and my hearing loss was picked up through routine primary-school hearing testing. It was a total shock to my parents, to me, because we hadn't really noticed. But there it was. A mild to moderate loss. And the doctors told me, "Your hearing will get worse. You'll most likely by profoundly deaf by the time you are 40." They were wrong. I was profoundly deaf in my early 20s. Thus began an incredible journey into deafness - one that was devastating at first, as you can possibly imagine - being a teenager, prescribed hearing aids through Australian Hearing - I promptly threw them in the drawer and refused to wear them. I started to not be able to use the television. I could no longer use the telephone. I stopped going to the cinema. I started to withdraw from social interactions with people, because the shame and humiliation when I couldn't hear something was just too great to bear. When I went to university at the age of 18 or 19, I decided to study journalism - possibly the worst thing you can study when you're going deaf. But I thought, "I won't let my disability stop me - I can be a writer, I can be a journalist!" It was very hard. It got to the point where I had been fired from a couple of jobs at my part-time work, I'd failed a couple of assignments because I hadn't heard when they were due in, and it got to the point where I considered suicide at the age of 21. Luckily, I didn't go through with it. I told my mum what I was planning to do, and I didn't go through with it. I decided to go the complete opposite direction. I learnt sign language. I learned lip-reading. I practised telling people that I was deaf. I practised explaining, if I went for a job interview, I wouldn't be able to hear on the phone. And life got better. It was this connection with people around me that I had been holding back from for so long because of the shame associated with being deaf. But things were still difficult, and it wasn't until 10 years later that I actually got a Cochlear implant. I was the age of 29. So, after a decade of deafness, I began to hear again. Cochlear implants are not an immediate solution. They take some time to get used to in many people. In some people, they don't work. For me, seven months after I was implanted, I could hear on the phone again. So this was amazing. But still, even though I can hear well, I still need captions on the television. I still need captions at the cinema. Because I go, and I can't hear very well. The music takes over the voices and things happen off-screen. And the other thing that people often don't realise is - when you take the Cochlear implants off, you are still deaf. So I have two small children now - aged three and six - and it is pretty funny when I'm in the shower and they come into the shower curtain and say... ..and I can't hear anything. I'm like, "Can you act it out?" So my son, the 6-year-old, is like, "Uhhh..." So for Wayne's benefit, I am acting out - "I'm hungry, Mum!" I do know Wayne quite well from when I was on the board of ACCAN. The last time I think I saw you, Wayne, I got your dog caught in the revolving door!

(LAUGHTER)

I was trying to help you walk out of some event and I thought I was being so helpful was - "This way, Wayne!" "Woof, woof, woof...!"

(LAUGHTER)

So, in my vision for a connected world, I have six things that would make life more wonderful. Six things that I'm really, really passionate about. The first one is captions. They're needed no matter where you are. Did you know that Facebook has just done research where they have discovered that 80% of users listen to videos without sound? They are realising the benefit of captions for the mainstream audience. And this is something that we're coming to see more and more. People realising that what's good for people with disabilities is actually fantastic for everyone. The other thing I'm really passionate about is live remote captioning. You can see an example happening right here, but this is also something that I used to use in my meetings at work. It's very hard to get - hard to organise - it can be expensive. My vision is for this to be easily accessible through a phone - you just hold it up and voice-recognition software just translates it. Anywhere you want. The third thing I would like to see is more use of sign language. I loved learning it. I've forgotten a lot of it now because I don't know many people who know it. My idea is that children would be taught basic sign in school, and then devices to interpret sign language for you, and then you can talk anywhere. The next thing is buildings that are deaf-friendly. I'm sure you've all experienced a restaurant or somewhere that has terrible acoustics. Buildings can be built that are acoustic-friendly and have good sound. They can be built with telecoil loop systems if you're not aware of what they are - I can press a button, connect to the telecoil, and I'll be able to hear directly what's going into this microphone, as long as I sit within the loop system. That would be ideal.

The fifth one is workplace accessibility. To be able to go to a job interview and say to somebody, "I'm deaf. I'd like this job." And for them to say, "We'd love to have you! What kind of modifications do you need? We've got live remote captioning, we make sure our company videos are captioned. Please, we need you to make up our diversity level. There needs to be over 50%. Please!" Ideal world.

The final thing is affordable hearing devices. This one is a big passion of mine. Obviously, having two devices, it's something that I'm using every day. Now that I work at Cochlear, I see sad stories of children in Third World countries that exist on one broken processor that's not working properly, or - sorry to say this, Wayne, but in New Zealand, they used to have to implant children with one implant and then the second one would be not free, so they would implant them, and then the child would be in debt to the government with this implant that's in their head. So New Zealand was quite behind. But they've changed now. They've gotten better at it. The thing that is amazing that is happening right now - because I work at Cochlear, I'm very lucky to trial different products that no-one else gets to see. I'm wearing two right now. And I'm very excited to say they're getting launched next week in Australia. These products - my time's run out!

JULIE McCROSSIN: Keep going...!

KATE OBERMEYER: This product is so exciting. I'll tell you why. The lady before who won the drone - she was talking about how, finally, people might be seen as being a bit more cool and people with disabilities have the benefit...? Well right now, I'm going to show you something - you won't be able to really see it, so I'll describe it. I've got my Apple Watch. I've got my Apple phone.

Hey, Siri. Play 'Ice, Ice Baby'. Now, you guys won't be able to hear anything - can you hear anything right now...? No, you can't, because it's streaming direct into my ears...

(LAUGHTER)

I can hear music. But you can't!

(LAUGHTER)

I can say, "Hey, Siri - pause music." Paused.

Hey, Siri. Call Teresa Corbin.

(LAUGHTER)

JULIE McCROSSIN: I can hear it making a noise.

KATE OBERMEYER: It's ringing! The music's gone down, the ringing's come up. Hi, Teresa. I can hear you. You're whispering? I can hear you. What time is it? Say a number... Five? I was hearing that! Because, this is streaming - I'm going to hang up on you now, Teresa...

(LAUGHTER)

Is this microphone working? I was streaming direct from my iPhone, bypassing everything else, into my Cochlear implant processors. I can have long conversations with Siri about how I feel - I often say to her...

Hey, Siri. I'm lonely.

She says, "Oh, OK? I'm sorry... Will you be my friend?"

"Oh, OK. I'll always be your friend." She actually talks. Try, on your iPhone, having a conversation with Siri. I can hear her. My vision for a connected world is all through technology - imagine if I could have a conversation with someone and say, "Caption that, Siri," and then suddenly, I'm talking to someone and it would caption it. Imagine if I could say, "Translate that, Siri," or "translate." The possibilities are limitless. I have people saying to me, "Damn, that's cool. I wish I was deaf." Finally! Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: That was so much fun. Thank you so much. A big round of applause. Do the hand wave!

(APPLAUSE)

Ladies and gentlemen, we've got one last TED Talk, and it's then going to segue into a little interview before we go into our final debate. That's the end of our day. We've just got an hour to achieve this goal. I'd like to invite forward now Professor Julian Thomas from RMIT, which was a place at the south where they've got a river called the Yarra. He's a professor of media and communications. He's the man behind measuring the digital divide - the Australian Digital Inclusion Index. He's going to give a talk, then I'll approach with him some extra material. And Wayne will get his images on the screen. Please make him welcome.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIAN THOMAS: Thank you. Thanks, Julie. It's lovely to be here, and I just want to say how important I think ACCAN's role has been in fostering and facilitating and driving along discussion about digital inclusion and the future and our connected future, if that sounds better, over many years. Certainly it's really shaped my life and that of many of my researcher colleagues, as researchers in this space.

I wanted to talk to you briefly about my sort of vision of something which I thought was critically important for the future of a connected world. And it's not as interesting or as exciting as the sorts of things - some of the sorts of things you've heard about. But I wanted to talk about public wi-fi. Because I think that is actually a critical ingredient connecting a lot of the things that we've heard about. When we think about the sort of extraordinary things that AI will be able to do in the future - and is able to do now, as we've just seen - when we think about the Internet of Things, when we think about the way in which so many industries and so many lives are likely to be transformed, in the fairly new future, as we heard earlier in this conference - there's actually an enabling technology which is very mundane, very boring, but wi-fi is actually critical to almost all of them. If we think about wi-fi, we often think of it as a kind of rather boring kind of household, domestic technology. But it's not confined there. You know - if you've seen all those ads for the interesting cheap cars - that wi-fi is an Australian innovation. I guess my idea is that, if we can match our country's technical prowess in developing this technology - which has changed so much - with some social and policy innovation, then the benefits would be enormous for connections for all of us. Wi-fi did, in fact, transform Australian households 10, 15 years ago, and continues to do so. It's actually the technology which is critical to the emergence of the mobile internet. We think of smartphones as phones. We think of them as descendants of the feature phones. We think of them as the creatures of cellular networks. But in fact, the mobile phone - the smartphone systems we use so much now, that are so critical to all of these amazing applications that we hear about, often depend enormously upon wi-fi as well as on cellular connections. So the app economy, the downloading - all of those kinds of things - that depends on wi-fi.

Just as wi-fi has transformed private spaces - the households - I think it also has to, and is, and will, transform public spaces as well, and these are, in fact, just as important as the household. In Australia, we put lots of money into subsidising internet connections in private spaces, in households - we've been talking about the nbn for days. We spend lots of money on subsidising mobile towers, the cellular networks that we all rely on for lots of purposes, but I think there's also a strong case for us to support wi-fi in public spaces, because I think this is actually critical to a more inclusive internet in this country - a more inclusive internet and a more mobile internet, which I think will be a better thing for all of us.

(BELL RUNG)

Why? Because, right now, over a fifth of Australians rely entirely on mobile devices to access the internet. That means that they have less data to do stuff with, they pay more for it, and they can do less online. So all of these different elements of inclusion are at work. The fact that people are mobile-only does not mean that they are hyperconnected and able to do every magical thing with a smartphone. In fact, mobile-only Australians are behind. They are disadvantaged in relation to the rest of the population. What do we do about that? We need to make sure that, in our public transport, in our public spaces, in our regional and remote communities, people have access to better internet, which needs to be wi-fi. That is what will enable people to access more data - which they need to do. It's what will enable them to have better and faster connections. It will enable them to do more online. So that's why I think public wi-fi is going to be a critical ingredient in a more inclusive and mobile internet.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: Bravo! Would you agree he's a very compelling person?

(LAUGHTER)

My one critique - oh, preference, recommendation - was don't say wi-fi's boring - it's a great Aussie innovation, and I'm proud as hell that we came up with it!

JULIAN THOMAS: And we all should be.